

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
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O R 251016Z JUL 78
FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8932
INFO AMEMBASSY BEIRUT IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
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USMISSION USUN NEW YORK
DIA WASHDC
CIA WASHDC

S E C R E T DAMASCUS 4251

E.O. 11652: XGDS-4
TAGS: PEPR, SY, LR
SUBJECT: SYRIAN CONFUSION IN LEBANON

1. POLOFF DISCUSSED LEBANON SITUATION WITH SYRIAN BUSINESS-
MAN WHO HAS SPENT PAST THREE MONTHS IN BEIRUT AND CLAIMS
CLOSE CONTACTS WITH SYRIAN MILITARY AND INTELLIGENCE COM-
MANDERS. HE SAID THAT LEBANON SITUATION EXTREMELY DANGEROUS
DUE TO ABSENCE OF FULL COORDINATION AMONG SYRIAN MILITARY
UNITS AND CONTRADICTIONARY INTELLIGENCE GATHERED BY COMPETITIVE
ORGANIZATIONS. LINES OF COMMAND FOR RIFAT'S DEFENSE FORCES,
INDEPENDENT BRIGADES, ALI HAYDAR'S SPECIAL FORCES AND REGULAR
UNITS ASSIGNED TO ADF ULTIMATELY GO BACK TO DAMASCUS RATHER
THAN BEING COORDINATED IN FIELD WHICH RESULTS IN DELAYS
AND CONFUSION IN DEVELOPING COORDINATED AND CONTROLLED
RESPONSE TO INCIDENTS. AS LONG AS UNITS IN BEIRUT
HAVE RECOURSE TO DAMASCUS FOR ORDERS NO COMMANDER IN
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THE FIELD CAN GUARANTEE FULL CONTROL OVER SITUATION.

2. DAMAGE, ACCORDING TO BUSINESSMAN, IS COMPOUNDED BY
CONTRADICTIONARY INTELLIGENCE BEING GATHERED BY GHANEM'S
G-2, RIFAT'S SPECIAL AGENTS, MADANI'S GENERAL INTELLIGENCE
OPERATIVES AND KHOULI'S AIR FORCE OPERATIVES. RAW UN-
COORDINATED INTELLIGENCE IS GOING DIRECTLY TO PRESIDENT

AL-ASSAD WHO IS SUPPLEMENTING THIS CONFUSION BY RECEIVING A PARADE OF LEBANESE POLITICAL VISITORS EACH WITH HIS OWN AXE TO GRIND. RESULT IS THAT PRESIDENT HAS NO RELIABLE INFORMATION BASE ON WHICH TO MAKE HIS DECISIONS.

3. COMMENT: THIS REPORT IS CONSISTANT WITH OTHER INFORMATION WE HAVE ON SYRIAN OPERATIONS IN LEBANON. THE DANGER IS THAT EVENTS CAN ESCALATE FASTER THAN THE SYRIANS CAN DEAL WITH THEM IN A RATIONAL, ORGANIZED WAY. THERE IS ALSO THE RISK THAT PRESIDENT AL-ASSAD MAY LOSE PERSPECTIVE ON CERTAIN ELEMENTS OF THE SITUATION THROUGH FAULTY AND CONTRADICTORY INTELLIGENCE. IT IS ALL TOO PLAUSIBLE, FOR EXAMPLE, THAT HIS SOURCES OF INFORMATION ARE PORTRAYING BROADER LEBANESE SUPPORT FOR SYRIAN CONFRONTATION WITH RIGHTIST MILITIAS THAN IS THE CASE. UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES WE BELIEVE IT IS IMPORTANT FOR US TO CONTINUE SHARING OUR APPRECIATION OF THE SITUATION IN AS MUCH DETAIL AS POSSIBLE AND WHEN THINGS COOL DOWN SEEK TO ENCOURAGE EARLY WITHDRAWAL OF UNITS FROM BEIRUT WHICH DO NOT ANSWER TO ADF CONTROL.
PELLETREAU

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